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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 000713

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CCA

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TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRIA: REVIEW OF LIBERTAD ACT SUSPENSION

REF: STATE 52541

Classified by: Acting Economic-Political Counselor Philip
Kaplan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Austrian Investments in Cuba

¶1. (U) To date, the only known Austrian foreign investment in Cuba is a Havana brewery (Salm Brau), established in 2003. Any investment of 100,000 Euros or more must be included in the statistics of the Austrian National Bank; the bank's records to not indicate any new investments in Cuba. Since the signing of the Austrian-Cuban Agreement on Investment Protection in 2001, Cuba has actively lobbied to attract Austrian investment in the tourism and hospitality sectors. According to the latest report of the Austrian Trade delegate for Cuba (based in Mexico), the Cuban Government is trying to attract investments in the agricultural and tourism sectors, as well as in cooperative projects in the mining sector, the hydrocarbon sector, and the machinery industry. The Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) occasionally organizes events to promote Austrian investment in Cuba.

¶2. (C) Embassy Vienna knows of no Austrian direct investment that might be subject to Libertad III. We have no information regarding any new or contemplated projects that might result in litigation under the Libertad Act.

Bilateral Trade Agreements with Cuba

¶3. (C) The Austrian-Cuban Agreement on Investment Protection and the Agreement on Economic, Industrial, and Scientific Cooperation have been in force since December 1, 2001. The Austrian export-import entity, the Kontrollbank, offers short-term export credit guarantees of up to Euro 2 million. Embassy is not aware of any Kontrollbank credits for firms doing business in Cuba. A double taxation agreement entered into force in September 2006.

Exchange Programs with Cuba

¶4. (U) Embassy is not aware of any Austrian government-sponsored exchange programs with the Cuban Government. However, an Austrian NGO, the Austro-Cuban Society, organizes annual "solidarity brigade" projects on farms and in the construction sector. Austrian universities also operate exchange programs with Cuban universities.

Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Cuba

¶5. (U) The GOA supports a common EU position to promote democracy and improve the human rights situation in Cuba. Austrian diplomats in Cuba meet with opposition leaders, dissidents, and civil society representatives in conjunction with diplomats from other EU states. The GOA does not unilaterally issue statements or adopt resolutions regarding human rights in Cuba; such actions are taken through the EU.

High-Level Diplomatic Visits

¶6. (U) MFA Poldir Thomas Mayr-Harting traveled to Havana in March 2008. There have been no other high-level diplomatic visits between Cuban and Austrian officials in the last six months.

Kilner